

Updated Q&A Regarding Possible Route Transfer of SR89A in West Sedona

Authored By City Manager Tim Ernster

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The City of Sedona and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) have been working together since 2006 to address safety concerns on State Route 89A. While the City and ADOT do not agree on the type of safety improvements to install, both agencies have supported continued discussion of a route transfer to allow the City to explore alternative safety improvements.

The Sedona City Council passed a resolution on August 10, 2010 directing staff to initiate fact-finding and enter into good faith negotiations to gather detailed information about the financial implications of a route transfer and negotiate conditions of a route transfer for the Council's consideration.

The City also hired CivTech, a consulting firm specializing in traffic engineering and transportation planning, to evaluate the SR 89A Route Transfer Study and identify alternative safety improvements.

On November 23, the Sedona City Council was presented the results of the CivTech Engineering Study regarding the cost for constructing alternative pedestrian, vehicular, and bicycle safety improvements for SR 89A in lieu of continuous roadway lighting (CRL) proposed by ADOT. The lighting is dark sky compliant and the poles are the same design style as those installed at the roundabouts on SR 179 – only 5 feet taller. Also, staff briefed the City Council on the status of negotiations with ADOT for a possible Route Transfer of SR 89A to city ownership. The following questions and answers relate to the new information presented to City Council on November 23.

Q: How much is ADOT offering to provide in financial support for the City to take over operation of SR 89A?

A: The total package being offered by ADOT is \$15,435,500. This includes \$8,010,150 in cash, paid to the City by June 2011, and \$7,425,350 in federal funds for identified capital projects, provided no later than June 2015. The offer includes funding for annual operations, maintenance costs, and road improvements. The federal funding would be provided for repaving the road, installing alternative safety improvement measures, a road enhancement project, and a traffic signal at Andante. In addition to annual maintenance and operation costs, the money would be provided for City identified improvements to SR 89A, and a portion of a future repaving project estimated to be necessary in ten to fifteen years.

Q: How much will the City have to pay to maintain the road over the next 10-15 years?

A: Funding provided by ADOT should be sufficient to cover the City costs over the next fifteen years. Currently, the City and ADOT each spend approximately \$35,000 annually for maintenance of SR 89A in West Sedona. The \$15,435,500 described above includes \$75,000 in annual funding for operations and maintenance costs for a fifteen-year time period. The total amount of ADOT funding for maintenance and operations costs for the fifteen-year period is \$1,125,000. This funding would be paid through an up front cash payment by ADOT and should be sufficient to cover the City costs over the next fifteen years.

Q: Do you really think that ADOT will install the continuous roadway lighting (CRL) if the City does not approve the route transfer?

A: Yes. At the November 23 meeting, John McGee, ADOT's Executive Director for Planning and Policy, made it very clear that the State will proceed immediately with installation of the continuous roadway lighting if the City does not approve the Route Transfer. ADOT has been consistent in its position regarding the installation of the lighting in all of its discussions with the City during the last nine months.

Q: What did the CivTech Engineering Study discover and recommend regarding alternative safety improvements and costs?

A: The CivTech Report indicated that minimum alternative safety improvements could be constructed for approximately \$1,600,000 that would provide a comparable level of safety to CRL. The recommended minimum improvements include medians with pedestrian barriers in two locations (from Soldiers Pass to Mountain Shadows, and from Rodeo Road to Andante), lighted pedestrian crossings, bicycle lanes, additional signage, and pedestrian activated crossings. CivTech also identified additional traffic safety measures for future consideration and study that would provide even higher levels of safety. These included additional medians, roundabouts, and pedestrian lighting. If the City finalizes a transfer, it should install at least the minimum safety improvements.

Q: Where would the money come from to build the alternative safety improvements?

A: ADOT has offered the City \$2,800,000 in federal funding to construct alternative safety improvements. These funds are part of the \$7,425,350 in federal funding explained in a previous question. The \$2,800,000 would be sufficient to cover the \$1,600,000 in minimum alternative safety improvements identified in the CivTech Report and described in the previous question. In addition, there are no restrictions on the \$8,010,150 in additional funds provided by ADOT as long as the funds are spent for transportation purposes in the corridor. These funds could be used for alternative safety improvements and/or a portion of the future repaving project.

Q: How will the medians proposed in the CivTech Report affect businesses along SR 89A in West Sedona?

A: Strategic medians will affect left-turning movements in the areas where they are placed and may create some inconveniences to the public, but drivers have historically compensated for medians and ultimately have found alternative routes to reach their destinations. Some studies indicate that medians do not necessarily have a detrimental effect on businesses and often have a positive effect. Medians have also proven to reduce accidents in communities where they have been installed.

Q: Will roundabouts be installed in West Sedona similar to SR 179?

A: Roundabouts were listed as an additional safety measure for future consideration and evaluation and were not included as part of the \$1.6 million in minimum safety improvements identified by CivTech. No decisions have been made regarding the safety improvements that will be actually built. Should the City decide to approve the route transfer, a citizen participation process will be conducted and feedback solicited from the community prior to any decisions being made about alternative safety improvements.

Q: If the City approves the Route Transfer, when will the alternative safety improvements be constructed and when will ADOT complete the repaving project and Andante Signal?

A: First, it will be necessary for the City to hire an engineering firm to develop a design concept for the safety improvements. The City would then conduct a citizen participation process to reach a community consensus. It would most likely take 18-24 months or longer to complete the engineering design and citizen participation process. The \$2,800,000 in federal funds for the alternative safety improvements is available to the City until June 2015. ADOT will start the repaving project no later than the spring of 2013. The Andante traffic signal would be constructed in 2011.

Q: If the City does not approve the Route Transfer, when will ADOT start construction of the continuous roadway lighting, Andante Signal, and the repaving project?

A: ADOT has informed the City that construction of the continuous roadway lighting, the Andante traffic signal, and the pavement preservation project would begin in late spring or early summer of 2011 and be finished in 2012 if the City does not approve the Route Transfer. Note the pavement preservation project includes striping for bike lanes.

Q: Which approach will give businesses the best break from the constant construction we have faced for most of the last 10 years?

A: As stated above, if the City does not accept the Route Transfer, construction of CRL and repaving will begin by spring or early summer of 2011. If there is a Transfer, repaving will be delayed for two years, until the spring of 2013.

Construction of alternative safety improvements will also take at least two and perhaps three years before construction begins.

Q: How will the City guarantee that ADOT honors a Route Transfer agreement?

A: It is extremely important that the City receive the necessary assurances from ADOT in the Intergovernmental Agreement that it will adhere to the terms of the agreement. If the City does not receive those assurances, it will not approve the agreement. Discussions between the City and ADOT are in process.

Q: If the City approves the Route Transfer, how far into the future will the funds provided by ADOT cover costs associated with owning and operating the road?

A: Over the next fifteen years, the City's local costs should be minimal unless unanticipated issues arise or improvements far exceed the minimum proposed by CivTech. The ADOT funding is sufficient to cover the historical maintenance and operation costs of both agencies projected over the next fifteen years. The funds will also pay for a portion of a future repaving project. After fifteen years, the City will be solely responsible for costs associated with the road.

Q: How will the City pay for road maintenance and operations costs beyond the fifteen years ADOT is covering?

A: The City has fifteen years to plan for this and a number of options exist. The most likely approach will be a combination of the following options: 1) in fifteen years, most if not all of the current \$6 million annual bond debt payment will be retired, and free up sale tax proceeds that is now being used to supplement the Wastewater system; 2) the \$35,000 the City currently pays for its share of road maintenance costs will not be needed and can be put in a restricted fund for future costs associated with SR 89A; 3) there are no restrictions on how the other funds provided by ADOT can be used as long as they are used for transportation costs in the corridor, so any excess funds can be used for other related road costs. These three options combined will free up several million dollars annually that can be used for City costs, including costs associated with a Route Transfer. Also, the City could set aside a portion of future annual budget surpluses in the restricted road fund to accumulate and earn interest, and then be used for future road projects on SR 89A.

The City will be holding an **Open House at the Sedona Public Library on Thursday, January 13, 2011, from 4 to 8 p.m.** on this issue. In addition, a **neighborhood listening session is scheduled for Wednesday, January 19 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at West Sedona School.** Also, as part of the public outreach and participation, City Council will hold meetings in February. We encourage you to attend.

For further information, please contact the City Manager's office at 204-7127.